

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 312859

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: SWEL ET US

SUBJECT: HARAR EYE CLINIC

REF: STATE 305477

1. REPRESENTATIVES OF BUMED AND IEF MET WITH AF/E OFFICER DEC 20 TO DISCUSS FUTURE OF HARAR EYE CLINIC. MAIN CONCERNS OF IEF REPRESENTATIVES ABOUT THEIR CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM CENTERED ON SECURITY SITUATION. AF/E PRESENTED EMBASSY'S AND DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS THAT SECURITY SITUATION IN HARAR REASONABLY GOOD WITHIN ETHIOPIAN CONTEXT AND STRESSED THAT WE FELT THERE HAD BEEN NO DETERIORATION IN SECURITY WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY DISCONTINUATION OF PROGRAM. BUMED REPRESENTATIVES SUPPORTED THIS ANALYSIS. FYI: IT WAS CLEAR FROM IEG REMARKS THAT THEIR FEARS STEMMED ENTIRELY FROM CDR. MITTAG'S REPORT. STATE AND BUMED BOTH MADE POINT THAT MITTAG'S EXPERIENCES WERE NOT TYPICAL AND THAT THEY DID NOT REFLECT A TARGETING OF NAVAL PARTICIPANTS IN
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PROGRAM. END FYI

2. IEF ALSO EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT THEIR DOCTORS BEING VIEWED AS PARTICIPANTS IN "POLITICAL ACTIVITY", THEY DESCRIBED INCIDENT IN WHICH ONE OF THEIR DOCTORS HAD BEEN QUESTIONED AT EMBASSY ADDIS BY "INTELLI-

GENCE OFFICER". ACCORDING TO BUMED, THE SURGEON GENERAL ALSO WISHES TO AVOID HAVING PARTICIPANTS USED AS SOURCES OF INTELLIGENCE. AF/E SAID THAT WE VIEWED HARAR EYE CLINIC PROGRAM AS NON-POLITICAL, PURELY HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITY, AND STRESSED THAT ANY QUESTIONING OF PARTICIPANTS BY EMBASSY HAD BEEN SIMPLY TO OBTAIN HARD-TO-GET INFO ABOUT SECURITY SITUATION IN HARAR WHICH HAD DIRECT BEARING ON EMBASSY'S ABILITY TO MAKE CORRECT ASSESSMENT OF WISDOM OF KEEPING AMERICANS THERE. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES, HOWEVER, SHOULD CLINIC PARTICIPANTS FEEL OBLIGED TO PROVIDE "INTELLIGENCE". ON THE OTHER HAND, WE SAW NOTHING UNUSUAL IN ANY AMERICAN CITIZEN, INCLUDING CASUAL OBSERVERS AND TOURISTS, EXCHANGING IMPRESSIONS AND EXPERIENCES WITH FOREIGN SERVICE PERSONNEL, A PRACTICE WHICH COULD HARDLY BE DEFINED AS "PROVIDING INTELLIGENCE".

3. BUMED, WHICH ORIGINALLY SUSPENDED PARTICIPATION DUE TO BELIEF THAT SECURITY SITUATION HAD DETERIORATED, IS NOW CONVINCED THAT SITUATION HAS BEEN REMEDIED AND IS WILLING TO RESUME PARTICIPATION. NAVY HAS ENOUGH VOLUNTEERS TO FINISH THIS YEAR. IEF EMPHASIZED

THAT THEY ONLY INTERESTED IN CONTINUING PROGRAM IF NAVY PARTICIPANTS WERE STRICTLY VOLUNTEERS.

4. RESULTS OF MEETING WERE:

-- ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE SOME RESERVATIONS, NAVY IS UNEQUIVOCALLY BEHIND CONTINUATION OF PROGRAM.
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-- IF IEF AGREES TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION, NAVY COULD HAVE DOCTORS BACK IN HARAR BY MID-JANUARY.

-- NAVY SAID IT NOW UP TO IEF TO DECIDE WHETHER IT WILL CONTINUE PROGRAM.

-- IEF MUST NOW CONSULT WITH ITS BOARD BEFORE MAKING FINAL DECISION. THIS CAN HOPEFULLY BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHIN TWO WEEKS.

5. DR. LAWRENCE KING, DEPUTY MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF IEF, CALLED AF/E DEC 22 TO SAY THAT IN PRELIMINARY SOUNDING OF IEF BOARD, A REQUEST HAD ARISEN FOR EMBASSY TO SEEK FROM MINISTER OF HEALTH A SIGNED LETTER TO DR. JOHN HARRY KING, MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF IEF, STATING THAT EPMG WANTED PROGRAM AT HARAR CONTINUED. NOTWITHSTANDING DR. L. KING'S OPINION THAT A LETTER FROM DEPT REPORTING EPMG INTEREST WOULD NOT

SATISFY IEF BOARD, WE WILL MAKE THE ATTEMPT. MEANWHILE

AND IN INTEREST OF TIME, IF EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE ITS
REQUESTING A LETTER FROM MINISTER HEALTH WOULD BE
COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, YOU SHOULD PROCEED ACCORDINGLY.
ROBINSON

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